



What just happened?!

—
Execution of warrant support handbook for
parents and carers





WHAT JUST HAPPENED
RESOURCE

CONTENTS

- What is a warrant and how does it happen?
- What happens next?
- Being an Appropriate Adult
- How should I feel?
- It's not just you
- Child impact
- Helping your child to feel safe
- Working as a team

EXECUTION OF A WARRANT



What is a Warrant?

When needed, a Magistrates' court can issue a warrant. This warrant gives permission for police officers to enter a property with consent from a judge to look for something or someone related to a suspected crime.

Officers may need to go into a person's home to look for something or someone, if they think a law has been broken, or that someone might be in danger. This is called an execution of a warrant.

How does this happen?

Before executing a warrant, officers gather information about the location and potential risks to create a safety plan. They then prepare the necessary equipment. Entry can be voluntary with consent or, if required, forced to secure the premises quickly. Officers may then search specified items, collecting any relevant evidence. If the warrant includes arrest, the named individuals will be taken into custody. All actions are performed according to legal guidelines.

Officers will aim to identify whether children are likely to be present in a property so they can avoid these times. However, this is not always possible.

Officers may search the belongings and take relevant items as evidence. Individuals named in an arrest warrant may need to be taken into custody. In some circumstances animals in the home may also need to be taken away by police. We understand that this can also be very distressing.



Step 1 Preparation

Officers get ready by collecting as much information as possible to assess risks and plan for safety.



Step 2 Equipment

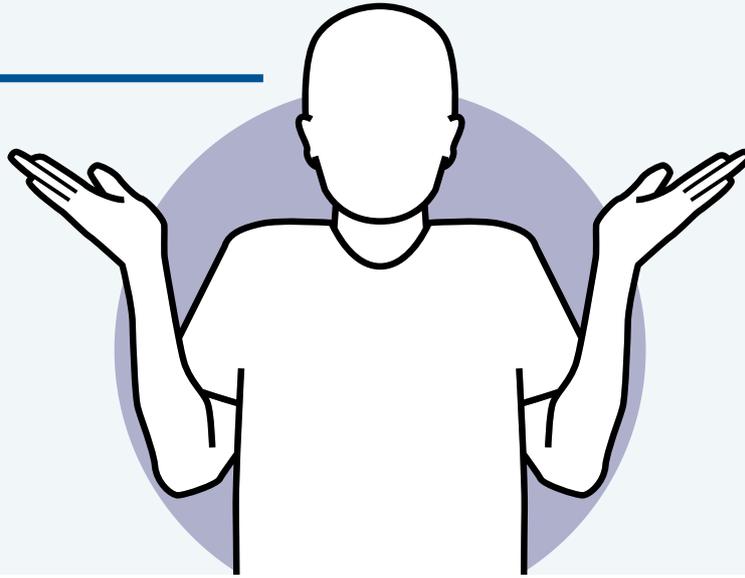
Officers prepare and quality check the necessary equipment and safety gear for entry.



Step 3 Entry

Officers may first try knocking on the door for entry. If needed, they will use tools for a fast, forced entry to ensure safety and quickly carry out the warrant.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



1 What is custody?

If a person has been asked to go with the police, they will be taken into custody. During this period, individuals are held in a secure environment while officers conduct investigations, which may involve questioning and collecting evidence such as fingerprints and DNA, and making decisions about charge or release. You may be able to speak to the person by phone during this time or be offered the opportunity to act as an Appropriate Adult if the person is under 18 years old or has particular vulnerabilities.

2 Will anyone else come?

Sometimes officers from a different team may come to your home either straight away, or in the days after, to ask questions, collect more evidence and see how you and your family are doing. Although officers may not be able to discuss the specifics of the case or the information used to obtain the warrant, they can listen to your concerns and signpost you to support.

3 When they come back

Sometimes a person will be kept in custody for a few hours or days before they can come back. When they return, they may have feelings they need to work through. This may mean they are quieter than usual, sad about what has happened, or happy to return. They may even feel lots of feelings at the same time. They might want to talk a lot about what has happened, or they may not want to speak at all.

4 What if they are away for longer?

Sometimes, if the police investigation leads to a decision that there is enough evidence to suggest a person has committed a criminal offence, the Crown Prosecution Service will decide whether to charge them. If charged and found guilty in court, a judge may impose a custodial sentence. This sentence involves detention in a prison. This process can be difficult for remaining friends and family, and the detained person.

BEING AN APPROPRIATE ADULT

The police have to get an AA (Appropriate Adult) as soon as a vulnerable adult or someone under 18 has been taken into custody. The AA's job is to protect the person's interests for as long as they are kept in custody in four different ways:

Support (and advise)

Helping them to keep calm, make sense of what is happening now and what happens next, as well as any decisions they need to make. They can speak to you in private at any time.

You don't have to be an expert; you just have to be there for them.

Help with understanding rights

Helping them to understand what help they should be offered and what they can ask for. You do not need to know this in advance. The police will give you a leaflet which explains this so you can communicate in age- and stage-appropriate language to meet the child's needs. This information comes in different languages and easy-read formats, and you can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Top tips:

- Everyone has a right to a lawyer (also called a solicitor or legal representative). This is a free service and independent of the police. As an Appropriate Adult, you can ask for one on their behalf.
 - A girl under 18 must be cared for by a female officer.
 - You can also ask for food, drinks, a phone call, medical support, and bedding if needed.
-

Checking on fair treatment

As an Appropriate Adult, you can be there when key things are happening to make sure that they are happening in a fair and proper way. You can let the custody officer know of any needs that a child might have so that they can look after them better (e.g., neurodiversity, communication needs, language barrier, traumatic impacts).

Help with communication

Making sure police staff know if the young person is struggling to understand or is getting distressed, or if they need additional support. Ensuring they know that it is up to them what they tell the police, making them aware of their right to answer or not, and being there to look out for whether they need a break in questioning.



HOW SHOULD I FEEL?

There are no right or wrong feelings. Having officers enter your home quickly can understandably cause fear for yourself and anyone else present. Sometimes, a range of emotions may be experienced after a frightening or shocking event. You might feel sad, angry, scared, lonely, or even confused. Some individuals who have felt in danger may experience relief. It is also normal to feel a mixture of emotions simultaneously. This is understandable and a natural response.

Experiencing something incredibly difficult can affect us in various ways. We experience our feelings physically. Sometimes our heart might beat faster, our breathing quicken, and we may feel hot or cold. Following a shock, it can affect our sleep patterns, as well as our appetite and eating habits. It can also impact how we respond to those around us and subsequent events. Even changes in bowel habits can occur.

These are normal reactions to something frightening or shocking



IT'S NOT JUST YOU



You may feel embarrassed about what has happened, which can make us feel shame, like we have done something bad even if we have not. You may feel like yours is the only home where this happened. Or, that your children are the only children who have been exposed to this process, but many people have been through this and have felt just like you!



"We had a visit from two police workers... When my 2-year-old entered the room, he instantly panicked, crying his eyes out, he laid on me and eventually went to sleep in my arms"

Parent

- Children Heard and Seen report



"It's pretty upsetting. It was hard to deal with at the time. It's shocking and yes, it's a hard thing to kind of get over."

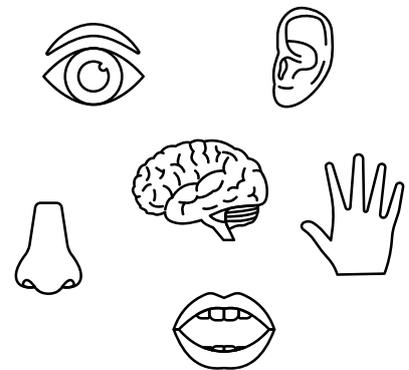
Young person

- Children Heard and Seen report



Triggers

You may feel frightened of things you never used to be scared of. A psychological trigger is something, like a sight, sound, smell, thought, or situation, that unexpectedly brings back intense feelings or memories from a past upsetting experience, such as an execution of a warrant. A trigger can make your mind and body feel like you're reliving the event in the present moment, even if you know you are now safe.



Feeling safe

Having police enter your house and remove someone living /staying there can be traumatic for you too. You might be mourning the absence of a loved one or the loss of ideas for what you wanted life to look like right now. Your feelings are real and valid. It is okay to recognise the fear, grief, anger, shame, or sadness you might be carrying, which may take time and support to heal from.

Staying connected to others following a distressing event can help to reduce the impact of trauma. It may feel hard, but reaching out to those around you can help when you are ready. If you are not ready to talk to people about what you have been through, you can set your own boundaries and let people know that "I'm not ready to talk about that," or, "I'm focusing on my child and my healing right now."

POTENTIAL IMPACT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Behaviour as Communication

The process of executing a warrant can also impact children and young people, whether they were away from the property when it happened or if they were in the building when it took place.

You may see changes in behaviour such as:

- Angry outbursts
- Quieter or withdrawn behaviour
- Agitation
- Changes in eating patterns
- Bed-wetting
- Needing more connection

These behaviours can be normal responses to abnormal events that are frightening. Trauma can take away a person's sense of control, and so children may try to regain control through their behaviours. Your child might respond in a range of ways. Your child may try to find ways to make sense of the behaviours their loved one is accused of. This could look like replicating

behaviours associated with crime, wanting to hide away from others, or wanting to be closer to the house or a caregiver more than usual to help them feel safe.

Psychological triggers can also impact children and young people. Where we see behaviour changes, remaining curious can help us to understand whether there are unmet needs that a child may need help with.



Helping your child to feel safe

Expressing and Normalising Feelings: Sometimes it can be hard for children to express the emotions that they are feeling. While they may not be able to verbalise the feelings, you can support them with opportunities to share in different ways, such as through music, art or creating a "worry box" together, where they can draw or write their feelings if talking feels too hard.

Let your child know that feeling sad, angry, scared, or confused is okay. You could say, "Many kids feel like you do after something scary happens. You can talk to me about it whenever you need." Also, show that it's okay if their feelings change daily, and that it is fine to feel joy again, in their own time.

How can I feel safe again?

8

Your home should feel like a safe place to be. You can use this sheet to help your child feel safe and calm again if you notice they effected by a psychological trigger.

Grounding

If you are feeling fear in your body, you can use special tricks to help your body remember that you are not in danger and to help it to feel safe again. This is called grounding. Here are some of the tricks that you can try:



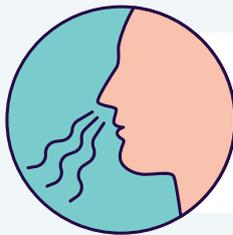
Nature

Be around nature. Go for a walk, listen to the wind in the trees, notice nature.



Get creative

Sometimes, sharing how you feel with words is hard. You can use different ways of sharing how you are feeling with others. Try scribbling, drawing or writing though thoughts into raps or songs.



Deep breathing

Slowly breathe in 4 seconds.
Hold your breath for 4 seconds
Breathe out for 6 seconds



Holding

Holding an object like a smooth stone or stress ball



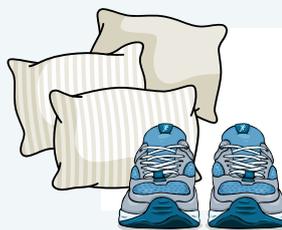
Sound

Listen to your favourite music, sounds or have some time of quiet. What feels good for you?



Senses. Slowly name:

5 things you see
4 things you can touch
3 things you can hear
2 things you can smell
1 thing you can taste



Move!

Hit a pillow, rip boxes or go for a run



Water

Hold your hands under cold running water.



5 finger trick

Trace your hand with a finger as you go up a finger breathe in slowly, and as you go down, breathe out slowly



TRUTH: It is okay to have big feelings right now

TRUTH: What happened was not your fault

Focus on Safety and Connection: Physical affection and one-on-one attention can help to rebuild a sense of emotional security. Your child may need more time with you. You could read together, play video games, go for walks and do activities together that help them to feel seen and secure. Consider ways to help children feel connected when they are away from you. A photo in their pocket, wearing the same aftershave/perfume as you, or a cuddly toy from home for younger children can help you to feel connected even when apart.

Give Simple, Honest Explanations: Children need to understand what happened in an age and stage appropriate way. Avoid overwhelming children with adult details that may become overwhelming. For younger children, you might explain that someone has broken a rule and now has to be away for a while. Reinforcing that it is not their fault and that they are safe. For older children, you can make sure they know they can ask questions and that you will help them understand. Honesty builds trust.



Give voice back: Frightening events can take away our sense of control. Maintaining calm, predictable home routines (like mealtimes, bedtimes, and school attendance) can help a child to feel safe. However, every child is different. Where possible, let your child make choices (what pyjamas to wear, what to have for breakfast, what film to watch). This can help to restore a sense of control. Consider what potential reminders may be lingering in the house (smells, footprints, tastes). Consider supporting a child in choosing a change of bedding or a scented candle to help a child change the sense of space.

Sometimes it can help to talk with children about what would happen if they ever felt scared again. Helping them to think about who they could call and where they could go if they felt frightened in other events. Having steps written down can help give children and young people a sense of power and reassurance.

Build your own safe spaces together. Find one or two small places, moments, or people where you feel physically and emotionally safe. This could be a comfortable room or a calming ritual like tea before bed.

Letting go of guilt: Remind children that what has happened was not their fault and that grown-ups sometimes make mistakes.

This time may be difficult for you and your family/those within the home. Sometimes this can bring about feelings of guilt. Loving your child, seeking help where needed, and showing up every day are what matter most. You don't have to be perfect to be enough.

WORKING AS A TEAM



You are best placed to provide your child or children under your care a sense of connection and belonging. Consistent and safe relationships can help children move through difficult times.

Sometimes our team may need to grow during these times.

It is understandable if you do not want to share what happened with others. However, considering the people around who can support your child/children in processing what has happened and who can be there to offer additional support for your family can be helpful. There may be times where your child wants to talk to others, and pre-informing schools or colleges can be a positive way of making this support accessible for your child when or if they need it.



Damage to property

Sometimes, during the execution of a warrant, damage to property can occur. There are a number of services that can help to secure your home again. You can visit [trustedtraders.which.co.uk](https://www.trustedtraders.which.co.uk) to find these. If relevant, you can also contact you housing provider for support.



Other people who can help

Many people's job is to support children affected by the justice system. Here are some organisations you can speak to for more support for you or any children in your care.

Name	Website
Children Heard and Seen <i>DEDICATED TO HELPING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY PARENTAL IMPRISONMENT.</i>	childrenheardandseen.co.uk
KOOTH <i>FREE, SAFE AND ANONYMOUS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT.</i>	kooth.com
Young Minds <i>MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE FOR PARENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE</i>	youngminds.org.uk
Himaya Haven <i>CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SUPPORT FOR PRISONER FAMILIES IN BIRMINGHAM</i>	himayahaven.co.uk
PACT <i>PRISONER FOCUSED SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN</i>	prisonadvice.org.uk

Resource development and design by



Changing childhoods. Changing lives.